

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO USIA WASHDC

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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USIAC

USIA FOR DIRECTOR FROM PAO; STATE FOR EA/P; CINCPAC FOR USIA ADVISOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE REFUGEE SITUATION/PUBLIC OPINION

REF: USIA 7359-C

1. POST APPRECIATES GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED REFTEL. WE HAVE CAREFULLY REVIEWED THESE WITH CHIEF OF MISSION AND WILL BE FILING REACTION AS REQUESTED.

2. POST HAS ALREADY CONTACTED EDITORS OF KEY ENGLISH AND CHINESE PRESS REGARDING REFUGEE SITUATION. AS WASHINGTON ALREADY KNOWS, MANY FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS BASED IN HONG KONG ARE NOW IN INCOCHINA, REPORTING THE SITUATION DIRECTLY.

3. PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY PLACE IN EAST ASIA, HONG KONG'S PEOPLE, THE GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS LEADERS AND THE MEDIA REMAIN KEENLY AWARE OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. MULTITUDES OF CHINESE HERE HAVE IN THE PAST VOTED WITH THEIR FEET, SWAM FOR FREEDOM OR EXERCISED IN

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SOME WAY THE OPTION TO LEAVE AS THEIR INSTINCTS FOR FREEDOM

OVERCAME THEIR NORMAL DESIRE TO STAY IN THEIR NATIVE TOWNS AND VILLAGES. THE PRINT AND BROADCAST MEDIA HAVE BEEN SATURATED WITH THE PHOTOS, FOOTAGE AND COPY SPELLING OUT THE EMOTION-CHARGED SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA AND THE HEARTLESS HARASSMENT THAT ACCOMPANIED THE EXODUS.

4. WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT, IN THE LONG-TERM, TO PEOPLE IN HONG KONG, BOTH LEADERS AND THE MAN IN THE STREET IS THE PROBLEM THE UNITED STATES FACES IN DEALING WITH A NEW IMAGE, IN WHICH AMERICA IS SEEN AS HAVING ABANDONED SOUTH VIETNAM, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT, CAMBODIA, TO FATE. FOR A QUARTER OF A CENTURY, WE HAVE BEEN A "ROCK OF AGES," STRONG AND RESPONSIVE TO ASIAN CALLS FOR HELP IN DEFENDING FREEDOM. HEAVY AND CONTINUOUS PLAY ON THE REFUGEE THEME COULD ACTUALLY INTENSIFY FEELINGS OF RESIGNATION AND HELPLESSNESS AMONG OUR FRIENDS, WHILE GIVING MOMENTUM TO THE GRIM PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE OF THE ENEMY.

5. WE REALIZE AND UNDERSTAND FULLY THE URGENT DEMANDS PLACED ON USIA AT THIS JUNCTURE AND ARE LENDING EVERY EFFORT. HOWEVER, IN OUR VIEW, A CONSIDERED ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES IN THE REGION MUST BE UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT DELAY, EVEN WHILE GRAPPLING WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION. WE BELIEVE THIS ANALYSIS WILL DEMONSTRATE THE NEED TO PROJECT A CREDIBLE IMAGE OF A UNITED STATES ABLE TO CONTINUE A VIGOROUS ROLE IN THE SECURITY OF THE REGION.
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